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USA sailor back home 'on a cloud'

Has no anger toward Vietnam

By John T. Mc Gowan
USA TODAY

NEW YORK — William Mathers — denying he felt anger toward his Vietnamese captors — returned to the USA Monday after 8½ months in a Southeast Asian prison.

"I'm riding on a fine, euphoric cloud and I hope to remain that way for a good many years," said Mathers, 41, hugging his parents in a reunion at Kennedy International Airport.

Mathers — a marine construction manager who has lived in Southeast Asia for 15 years — was sailing from Singapore to Hong Kong on his schooner last July when he was stopped by a Vietnamese patrol and forced aboard their boat at gunpoint.

Four members of his crew were released soon after their



UPI
ARRIVES HOME: William Mathers, center, with father William and mother Myra, plans to shave the beard he grew in prison.

capture, the fifth a month later.

The Vietnamese repeatedly interrogated him, accused him of spying, then tried to make him spy for them, he said.

In solitary confinement, he read *Shogun* three times and dreamed plans for a new boat.

His parents, Manhattan lawyer William Mathers and Myra Mathers of Locust Valley, N.Y., finally paid Vietnam a \$10,000 fine for his freedom.

His 50-year-old, 80-foot

schooner *So Fong* — all he had to show "for my first 18 years of work" — was not returned.

"I wear a hearing aid but the Vietnamese confiscated that too," he said with a smile. He had trouble hearing reporters at an airport news conference.

Mathers — a Yale graduate and Navy veteran of the Vietnam War — said he had more pity for the Vietnamese than anger: "I have no feeling of anger at all."